87R2325 JAM-D

By:  Turner of Tarrant H.B. No. 1918

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of a criminal offense for failing to secure certain children in a rear-facing child passenger safety seat system.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Section 545.412, Transportation Code, is amended by adding Subsections (a-1), (a-2), and (d) to read as follows:

(a-1)  A person commits an offense if the person operates a passenger vehicle, transports a child who is younger than two years of age, and does not keep the child secured during the operation of the vehicle in a rear-facing child passenger safety seat system unless the child:

(1)  is taller than three feet, four inches; or

(2)  weighs more than 40 pounds.

(a-2)  A peace officer may not:

(1)  stop a motor vehicle or detain the operator of a motor vehicle solely to enforce Subsection (a-1); or

(2)  issue a citation for an offense under Subsection (a-1) unless the officer determines that the person has previously been issued a warning or citation for or convicted of that offense.

(d)  It is a defense to prosecution under Subsection (a-1) that the child has a medical condition, as evidenced by a written statement from a licensed physician, that prevents the child from being secured in a rear-facing child passenger safety seat system.

SECTION 2.  Section 545.4121(b), Transportation Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b)  It is a defense to prosecution of an offense to which this section applies that the defendant provides to the court evidence satisfactory to the court that:

(1)  at the time of the offense:

(A)  the defendant was not arrested or issued a citation for violation of any other offense;

(B)  the defendant did not possess a child passenger safety seat system in the vehicle; and

(C)  the vehicle the defendant was operating was not involved in an accident; and

(2)  subsequent to the time of the offense, the defendant obtained an appropriate child passenger safety seat system for each child required to be secured in a child passenger safety seat system under Section 545.412 [~~545.412(a)~~].

SECTION 3.  Sections 545.413(b) and (b-1), Transportation Code, are amended to read as follows:

(b)  A person commits an offense if the person:

(1)  operates a passenger vehicle that is equipped with safety belts; and

(2)  allows a child who is younger than 17 years of age and who is not required to be secured in a child passenger safety seat system under Section 545.412 [~~545.412(a)~~] to ride in the vehicle without requiring the child to be secured by a safety belt, provided the child is occupying a seat that is equipped with a safety belt.

(b-1)  A person commits an offense if the person allows a child who is younger than 17 years of age and who is not required to be secured in a child passenger safety seat system under Section 545.412 [~~545.412(a)~~] to ride in a passenger van designed to transport 15 or fewer passengers, including the driver, without securing the child individually by a safety belt, if the child is occupying a seat that is equipped with a safety belt.

SECTION 4.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.